

H58

Rongelap file

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RONGELAP REASSESSMENT PROJECT

November 14, 1988

Congressman George Miller
Congressman Morris Udall
Congressional Delegate Ron DeLugo

Gentlemen:

I have read H. Con. Res. 395, submitted by you on Oct. 21, 1988 -- a concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress regarding the habitability of Rongelap Atoll, and which has been referred jointly to the Committees on Interior and Insular Affairs, and on Foreign Affairs.

The Resolution refers specifically to two documents, a DOE-1982 booklet and a Final Report by me as referee of the Rongelap Reassessment Project.

Without in any way meaning to affect the intent of the resolution, may I point out that the resolution incorrectly cites the Reassessment Report five times. May I also comment on one reference to DOE.

I would therefore like you to consider the following, to avoid needless discussion later on at hearings and committee meetings.

Page 2, ¶ 5. There might be some confusion here as to whether or not the reference is to the whole of Rongelap Atoll or to residence on Rongelap Island alone. Perhaps this could be specified more precisely. (This is my "DOE comment".)

Page 4, item (3). The Report did not reveal for the first time that the Rongelap people had been exposed to plutonium. Lawrence Livermore Report 52853 Part 4, page A-46 (1982) reported on plutonium exposure and these estimates were in the total dose estimates used by DOE 1982. The DOE 1982 booklet mentions plutonium on pages 13 and 21.

What the Report revealed was that the Livermore estimates for plutonium's contribution to dose were far less than Brookhaven's later work in 1985-87 by the fission-track method. The Report questions the accuracy and reliability of the fission-track method in these studies.

Page 4, item (4). This is muddled because someone took two clauses from two different parts of the Report ~~quoted~~ and put them together. The impression is given that the doses stated by DOE 1982 were wrong and significantly too low. The doses stated by DOE 1982 were correctly drawn from the work of Lawrence Livermore, the source of its dose estimates; they were based on the representative type B diet (used for all doses calculated in DOE 1982 and also by me throughout the Reassessment Report). The error made by DOE 1982 was that it cited the wrong diet for the doses given.

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Miller, Udall, DeLugo
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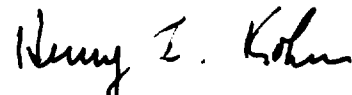
Page 4, item (6). I cannot recall having made such statement in the Report, or in answering some of the questions which you sent to the Secretaries of Interior and of Energy. However that may be, read Note 5, page 62 of the Report, which defines the protective action guide (category 3) that applies specifically to this case, i.e., not more than 0.2 rem (bone marrow) per year, population average, or not more than 0.5 (bone marrow) per year to an individual. Specific data are given in the Report, as follows:

- (a) On page 28, using Lawrence Livermore's data I find 2.5 rem per 30 years. Why doesn't the Resolution refer to this?
- (b) On page 33, using the Brookhaven data I find 1.2-5.5 rem for 30 years. Since the range is due to the uncertainties of Brookhaven's plutonium estimates, I have no confidence in the highest value of that range.

Page 4, item (10). Whole-body counting was not to be a comprehensive study, but one to establish a baseline of comparison for use after the return to Rongelap (whenever that might be).

I shall be glad to attempt answering questions about these points.

Sincerely yours,



Henry I. Kohn, Referee
Rongelap Reassessment Project

cc: Senator Anjain
REPMAR (Oliver)

100TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. CON. RES. 395

Expressing the sense of the Congress regarding the habitability of Rongelap Atoll.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 21, 1988

Mr. MILLER of California (for himself, Mr. UDALL, and Mr. DE LUCA) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred jointly to the Committees on Interior and Insular Affairs and Foreign Affairs

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Congress regarding the habitability of Rongelap Atoll.

Whereas on March 1, 1954, the United States detonated a nuclear weapon in the atmosphere at Bikini Atoll—code named "Bravo";

Whereas the United States proceeded with "Bravo" knowing that Rongelap Atoll was inhabited and that the people of that atoll were not informed of the test, warned of its danger, or evacuated to safety;

Whereas it was subsequently determined that the Rongelap people were exposed to a near lethal dose of nuclear radiation from the Bravo test;

Whereas in 1978, the Department of Energy undertook a comprehensive examination of radiation in the Northern Marshall Islands;

Whereas in 1982, the Department of Energy published, in English and Marshallese, a study entitled "The Meaning of Radiation of Those Atolls in the Northern Part of the Marshall Islands That Were Surveyed in 1978" (DOE study);

Whereas the DOE study displayed a map indicating that, as of 1978, the levels of radiation continued to be very high throughout Rongelap Atoll—virtually as high as Bikini and Eniwetok Atolls where the nuclear weapons tests had been conducted—24 years after the Bravo test;

Whereas the publication of the DOE study deeply angered and frightened the Rongelap people;

Whereas the Department of Energy, despite the tables and maps displaying high radiation readings in the DOE study, assured the Rongelap people that Rongelap was safe, that levels of radiation exposure were within United States guidelines, and that there was no reason to be concerned;

Whereas the Rongelap people, believing their health and safety to be at risk, asked the United States to evacuate and relocate them;

Whereas in August 1983 the Marshall Islands legislature, the Nitijela, unanimously adopted Resolution No. 25 in which the United States was requested to provide "adequate funding for the resettlement of the people of Rongelap in some other place of their choice which is safe and free from contamination";

Whereas when no assistance for relocation was forthcoming, the Rongelap people evacuated Rongelap Atoll at their expense to the Kwajalein Atoll;

Whereas the Compact of Free Association was signed into law in January 1986, and ratified by the United States and the Republic of the Marshall Islands in October 1986;

Whereas section 103(i) of the Compact of Free Association Act of 1985 (Public Law 99-239) declares that it is the policy of the United States "to take such steps . . . to overcome the effects of such fallout on the habitability of Rongelap Island, and to restore Rongelap Island . . . so that it can be safely inhabited";

Whereas Public Law 99-239 directed a special independent review of the 1982 Department of Energy radiation study to determine if the Department of Energy's data were accurate and if the conclusions in the Department of Energy study were supported by the data;

Whereas Public Law 99-239 further provided that if the party reviewing the data concludes that the Department of Energy conclusions were "fully" supported by "adequate" data, then "the report to the President . . . and the Congress shall so state";

Whereas Public Law 99-239 then declared that "if the data are inadequate to support conclusions as to habitability or that such conclusions as to habitability are not fully supported by the data", then a second comprehensive and independent study was to be initiated;

Whereas the Government of the Marshall Islands contracted with Dr. Henry I. Kohn to lead the Rongelap Reassessment Project in a review of the Department of Energy 1982 radiation study;

Whereas the Rongelap Reassessment Project Final Report was submitted to Congress July 22, 1988;

Whereas the Rongelap Reassessment Project—

(1) concluded that Rongelap Island was conditionally safe for adults but not for children at this time;

(2) declared the Department of Energy 1982 data to be "meager";

(3) revealed, for the first time, that the Rongelap people had been exposed to plutonium;

(4) concluded that the Department of Energy had made significant errors with respect to radiation doses and specifically determined that "DOE-1982 stated that the diet on which its reported doses were based" was "~~incorrect~~", and that as a consequence "the doses would be higher";

(5) determined that the "Department of Energy failed to utilize" certain data from Brookhaven National Laboratory when calculating doses;

(6) concluded, from Brookhaven's data, that the total adult dose to the bone marrow range exceeds the United States formal guidelines for exposure to radiation;

(7) discovered that certain urine samples obtained from the Rongelap people indicating a wide range in plutonium contamination "were neither tabulated nor analyzed";

(8) concluded that the Department of Energy 1982 radiation study did not provide information regarding exposure to children;

(9) described the Northern Islands of Rongelap Atoll as "forbidden territory" and concluded in the Final Report all of those islands in Rongelap Atoll to be "off limits"; and

(10) recommended a series of comprehensive studies ~~in~~ ~~cluding studies~~ regarding the children, plutonium, whole-body counting, chromosomal studies, and the physical environment of the atoll; and

Whereas the statutory requirement that an affirmative declaration be made to the President and the Congress if the data and conclusions as to habitability were accurate in the De-

partment of Energy 1982 study is not fulfilled by the Rongelap Reassessment Project: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring)*, That the Congress—

3 (1) reaffirms its commitment to the Government of
4 the Marshall Islands and the Rongelap people that it is
5 the policy of the United States to take such actions as
6 are necessary to restore the habitability of their home-
7 land;

8 (2) concludes, based on a review of the Rongelap
9 Reassessment Project Report to the Congress, that the
10 data in the 1982 Department of Energy radiation
11 study is inadequate and that the conclusions therein as
12 to habitability are not fully supported by such data;

13 (3) concludes that the comprehensive, independent
14 study of Rongelap, as set forth in section 103(i)(2) of
15 Public Law 99-238 should be immediately undertaken;

16 (4) concludes that such a comprehensive and inde-
17 pendent study should examine all the islands of the
18 Rongelap Atoll;

19 (5) concludes that the comprehensive and inde-
20 pendent study should include, among other relevant
21 matters, specific examination of—

22 (A) radiation and related problems with re-
23 spect to the children on Rongelap;

24 (B) past cumulative doses of plutonium; and

1 (C) possible chromosome damage to the
2 entire Rongelap population; and

3 (6) concludes that the Secretary of the Interior
4 and the Secretary of Energy should, out of existing
5 funds, make available to the Government of the Mar-
6 shall Islands, such sums as may be necessary for such
7 government, with the approval of the Rongelap people,
8 to contract for such study.